

Relation of the Pastor to the Young People's Society.

BY AN ONTARIO MINISTER.

To get at the relation which should exist between the pastor and any society, we should have a clear conception of the duties and aims of each.

What is the pastor's work? In general terms he is the ambassador of Christ to proclaim by word and life the terms of reconciliation between God and man, and in the fulfilment of his commission he is the director of the spiritual work of the church.

To particularize. His duties are the awakening of the careless, the warning of those in danger, the comforting of the sorrowing and bereaved, the visiting of the sick, the strengthening of the weak and tempted, the edifying of believers, and leading them into work for Christ. Stress must be laid on the spiritual side of his works. So that in considering the pastor's relation to the "Young People's Society" we must ever keep in mind his position as pastor of the whole congregation. He has the oversight and care of every department of work. He must be nobody's man, the man of no class. No society's man to the exclusion or subordination of the rest. Amid his multifarious duties and responsibilities what relation does he bear to the Young People's Society among the other organizations of his congregation? We take it for granted that it is organized for spiritual work, and so has a right to claim him as a relation. If it is organized to develop the young people along the line of neck-tie socials, pink teas, charity balls, kirmesses or any other kind of messes, he should not be claimed as an acquaintance even, much less a relation. We take it that their work is spiritual.

I Let us define his relation first negatively.

1. The pastor is not to be the absolute monarch. A prominent minister was heard to say, "I have now a church exactly to my liking. All those opposed to my views and methods of working have been weeded out. We have built a fine new brick church, and all moves along in peace and quiet." The one to whom he was speaking said; "You have made a great mistake, you should have built the church of wood, a wooden congregation should meet in a wooden church. Brick is too good for slaves, even your slaves. Your church has become your congregations tomb, and you are death, the shadow watching at the door, to see that no one in a trance by mistake is buried there, because he may wake up inside and scare the corpses." The pastor has no right to mastership in the absolute sense. The members must not be like clay marbles, moulded by his hands, and made to trundle in any direction he wishes them.

2. The pastor is not to be the slave of the society. He is not to be a bullet of clay trundling in the direction the young people always wish.

Some time ago the writer heard a young man give expression to sentiments like these. "You know our pastor is a little behind the age. He has not caught on to the spirit of this age. But we gave him to understand the numbers, and the strength, and the influence of the young people, and that we had power to turn the church inside out, and the pulpit too. Many ministers do not realize that the last decade of the nineteenth century is the young people's age, and that young thought is in the ascendant. The time will soon come when side by side with the great assemblies and conferences of the Churches there will be an assembly of representatives of the young people, and all measures to be brought before the assembly of the old men shall first be considered by the young assembly, and passed on, if believed to be for the good of the Church, but stopped right there, if thought not to be good. I tell you our society made our pastor toe the mark." He called that kind of stuff "young thought," young something else would have been a better appellation. The pastor is not to be the slave of the Young People's Society, nor his main duty to toe the mark they chalk on the floor for him.

3. The pastor is not to be a nobody in relation to it. He must not hang like Mahomet's coffin between heaven and earth—no proper relation to either.

We have given the extremes of the negative relation but this may make us all the more easily see his true one.

II. In the positive sense what relation should he bear?

If there is one thing more than another which gladdens the pastor's heart it is seeing the young people whom he has baptized perhaps, whom he has known and borne upon his heart, come out and openly confess their Saviour. And then, when in the Young People's meeting they open their lips for the first time in public prayer, or in a word of counsel or experience, it brings gladness to his heart which cannot be expressed in words. At the close of a prayer meeting, when he has had such experience, the joy has been too great for anything but tears. Who has not heard old members of the Church say "I would give anything to hear one of my boys open his lips tremblingly even haltingly in prayer!" So if there is one more in sympathy than another with a young person opening his lips timidly for the first time in public it is his pastor.

1. The relation in which the pastor should stand then to the Young People's Society is that of *friend*—friend full of sympathy for every member of it. Every one should be free to go to him, consult with him, talk over difficulties, experiences, work, and know that all such confidences are sacred, that the individual will never be betrayed by look, or hint, or word. The most telling applications of truth often come to a minister in that way, and often prove a blessing to many. The pastor must be the friend of the society, and if his nature is such that he cannot be that he has mistaken his call to the ministry.

2. The relation is that of *director* along with the officers of the society. Not in the sense of dictator, but as prime minister and cabinet. He should know the young people as a whole better than any other man, their capabilities, their need, then along with the officers help to shape the policy, mark out the path, point out the work, and the lines of individual improvement as well as public helpfulness. Oversight is the word, the officers and he being a unit in purpose and plan.

3. He is to be *teacher* also. He should always be ready to give assistance to those who lead the meeting. He has books, and knows the kind of help the leader needs, and should be ready to give personal assistance as well as show the leader how to help himself. He should have an evening once a month for such aid, and should be at the service of every member. In the various forms of service which the society is to give, members should be free to come to the pastor, and he should be prepared to give time and thought to help them in undertaking and carrying on their work for the Master.

4. He is the *pastor* of the Young People's Society. The members of the society, while they have mutual relations with each other, should recognize the fact that the minister is their pastor. They are not to usurp his functions. Each should recognize clearly that the minister is pastor of the whole flock, and so in all these individual efforts seek to co-operate with him.

Every member in earnest in the work of Christ will find many opportunities of associate work with the pastor. They have the companions with whom they are intimate, and a word from them will help the pastor in dealing wisely with young people with whom he may as yet be only partially acquainted. Every active member should be enrolled as the pastor's assistant in the oversight of the flock, and thus be a helper of him to his work as well as in his work, and be able to spare him not a little in his work of sharing it with him. Oh the rich blessing which comes upon a pastor's heart and work from a Young People's Society in sympathy and harmony with him.

New life is often breathed into his weariness and despondency, success is made to crown his efforts, and his soul made exceeding glad,